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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
24 February 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Intelligence)
SUBJECT: Offshore Island Situation

General

The true extent of Nationalist success in air strikes on Communist shipping in the Taishan area, midway between Nanchishan and the Matsus, is still not known.

The Communists continue to hold the Taishan Islands, and press accounts from Taipei say the Nationalists do not intend to attack the islands in an effort to dislodge the Communist forces.

Repeated Communist statements vowing eventual "liberation" of all the coastal islands leave no doubt that further attacks can be expected. Some of the preparations along the coast may well be defensive in nature, however, as Peiping must now consider the possibility of US participation in defense of some of the islands.

Nanchishan

MAAG officials in Taipei report that the 2,800 Chinese Nationalist regulars of the 49th Regimental combat team on Nanchishan were to begin withdrawing to Formosa on the afternoon of 24 February (0400 24 February, Washington time). Nationalist landing craft, escorted by a destroyer, four destroyer escorts, and six other ships, were to be used in the withdrawal, which is expected to be completed in 13 hours. Nationalist planes are to provide air cover.

PACOM Review
Completed

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No mention is made in the MAAG report of the 700 guerrillas on the island. Presumably they remain on Nanchishan. About 10 days ago, MAAG reported rumors that the Nationalists would withdraw all regular forces from Nanchishan, and increase guerrilla strength there to 5,000 or 6,000, using guerrilla troops from the Tachens. The current operation may be the first phase of such a program.

With Nationalist ships and planes operating alone close to the mainland, there is some possibility that the Communists will try to interfere with the withdrawal.

Press accounts from Taipei still quote Nationalist spokesmen as saying Nanchishan will be held at all cost, although some correspondents speculate that a complete withdrawal is imminent.

Nationalist press states that three "waves" of Nationalist planes attacked Communist islands 12 miles north of Nanchishan on 24 February. The Nationalists claim "heavy damage" to Communist military positions, but this is not confirmed.

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On 22 February, one MIG-15 and four LA-11 piston fighters approached southwest Nanchishan on a reconnaissance mission, according to the Chinese Nationalists. Chinese Communist planes extensively reconnoitered the Tachens before commencing heavy air attacks there.

Quemoy

Negative.

Matsus

Negative.

Weather

Visibility in the Formosa Strait area will be good during the next 24 hours. Skies will be partly cloudy with northeast winds of 12-18 knots.

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